An Extended Look At A Career That's Been Anything But Sun, Fun and Surf.

The Beach Boys

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BY REX PATTON

"After all, he IS your brother."

In 1961 Audree and Murry Wilson went on a vacation to Mexico. They left their sons — Brian (19), Dennis (17) and Carl (15) — back home in Hawthorne, California with $800 for food. But instead of spending the money on something as dumb as nourishment, Brian and Carl, along with cousin Mike Love and friend Al Jardine, rented musical instruments and studio time and cut a record. It was a song Brian and Mike had written called "Surfin," featuring Carl on guitar, Al on a stand-up bass (taller than he was) and Brian playing drums on a garbage can lid. Later, when Mom got home, Dennis was *forced* into the group ("HE *DID* COME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR THE SONG AND AFTER ALL HE *IS* YOUR BROTHER"), Brian switched to bass and Al to guitar. The record was released on a local Los Angeles label (Candix) and went top three in L.A. It hit number seventy-five on the national charts.

Capitol Records signed them and their first release was the 1962 double-sided SMASH, "Surfin Safari"/"409." From then until 1967 they had an incredible string of hits. You know them all — "Surfin' U.S.A.," "Help Me Rhonda," "Good Vibrations," "Darlin'," et cetera. *Seventeen* top ten songs in five years. They were the largest selling artists in the world behind the Beatles. Their songs created the California "myth" and defined their generation with such accuracy and latitude that each succeeding one has found a voice

in their music as well. But behind the sun and fun and good vibrations is the dark side, a story most people don't know. It is the story of the most innovative group popular music has ever produced. It is the story of true genius and monumental despair. It is the story of the Beach Boys.

"This is the record of all time."

Prior to the Beach Boys, groups and solo acts were taken into a record company's own studio, by a producer who, if he didn't actually select the material, at least molded it into his image, hired the session musicians and usually put a couple of his songs on the LP. All the artist did was walk in, sing what he was told and split. No opinions, no input, nothing.

The Beach Boys changed all that. Their first album was produced by a Capitol man (after all, they were an untested commodity), but soon afterwards, Brian did it all. He wrote, arranged, conducted, produced, played and sang on every track. And he mixed the instrumental parts *while* they were being recorded. All of this in spite of being deaf in one ear.

(Brian's deafness was either congenital or the result of being smacked in the head by his father, who frequently beat and humiliated his three sons, once forcing a preteen Brian to stare into the empty socket of his missing eye. Of course Brian was not the perfect child; he once defecated on a plate and set it in front of Murry at the dinner table. His father vehemently denied either hitting Brian or having a feces casserole set before him. He phoned Brian and angrily demanded he retract the stories as they appeared in *Rolling Stone*. Brian laughingly told his dad, "I'll tell you what, let's tell them that I shit in your ear and you hit me in the head with a plate.")

Brian fought his record company and used different studios. And when his songs got too complex for the group's instrumental prowess, he called in the young turks of the session world that Phil Spector had been using — Glen Campbell, Leon Russell, Larry Knechtel, Hal Blaine, et cetera — all famous now, but then struggling to break into the closed session musician empire. Phil Spector and Brian Wilson gave them a break, and they responded with some of their most inventive playing.

Listen to the records from the tail end of the car and surf phase in '64 up to '66 and "Good Vibrations." They were full of incredibly elaborate arrangements with even more complex vocals on top of them, yet the songs were instantly memorable. Compare them to the Beatles' output of the same period — "Hard Day's Night," "Eight Days a Week," "Help," et cetera — all great records, but not nearly as inventive. Only Phil Spector's production compared favorably, and only the vocals of the Association (while you're laughing grab a pair of headphones and listen to "Windy" again), The Mamas and Papas and Queen have ever come close.

In 1966 they released *Pet Sounds*, considered a masterpiece by critics and musicians alike. Eric Clapton said in *Hit Parader*, "All of us, Ginger, Jack and I consider it to be one of the greatest LPs ever released. It encompasses everything that's ever knocked me out and rolled it into one. We're all gassed by it. Brian Wilson is without a doubt a genius." A concept album before there was such a term, *Pet Sounds* is a song cycle of a love affair and of a youth growing into adulthood and not fitting in. Exotic instruments such as baritone harmonicas, bicycle bells, banjos, an upside down plastic bottle played with a stick for drums and steel guitar combined with Brian's incredible vocal arrangements to produce sounds no one had ever done before. And if the group couldn't cut it vocally, Brian sang all the parts himself through overdubbing.

Because he cut his records live there would sometimes be up to twenty musicians in the studio at one time with Brian telling them what he heard in his head. If someone couldn't grasp it, he would take the instrument, regardless of what it was, play the part and hand it back to him. "Sloop John B." (not a part of the song cycle but included on the LP at Capitol's insistence because of its hit single status), "Wouldn't it Be Nice" and "God Only Knows" (which Paul McCartney has called it the greatest song ever written) all came from that album. And speaking of the Beatles, what did *they* think of *Pet Sounds?* In a 1981 interview Paul said his reaction at the time was, "My God, this is the record of all time . . . what are we going to do now?" Although it was almost a year off, "Sgt. Pepper" was their answer.

Twenty versions of one song

So how do you top an album like *Pet Sounds?* Well you spend six months in four different studios, use ninety hours of tape and twenty five thousands dollars and come up with twenty versions of one song — "Good Vibrations." The first version had R&B type horns in it and sounded like something Wilson Pickett would have done. The final version turned out to be what Brian called "a pocket symphony," with multiple stops and starts, acapella sections, pre-Lothar and the Hand People use of the therimin, a cello doing triplets (a musical device heretofore relegated to Fats Domino's right hand),and it was brilliant. It became the group's first million-selling single and a No. 1 hit around the world.

Ike Turner said a decade later, "I don't listen to music much, there's really not much going on. Really only two records have ever gotten to me . . . 'River Deep Mountain High,' " by his wife Tina, with Phil Spector, and considered by some, myself included, as the best *record* ever made, "and 'Good Vibrations.'" It was a stunning achievement by any standard. Complex, yet accessible and wildly popular; could Brian ever top it? Well, he did, but very few people have heard how. It was called *Smile.*

Smile?

Late '66 and early '67 was a very good time for the Beach Boys. "Good Vibrations" was No. 1, they had played to sellout crowds all over Europe, were voted the No. 1 group in the world in the annual *New Musical Express* poll (relegating the Beatles to the runner-up spot for the first time since their emergence) and when people talked of the rock hierarchy, it was a triumverate . . . Lennon/McCartney, Dylan and Wilson. CBS-TV did a piece on this "new rock," and Brian was spotlighted as a major leader in the movement. Leonard Bernstein was the host of the show and in introducing Brian he said, "There is a song, too complex to get all of the first time around. It could only come out of the ferment that characterizes today's pop music scene. Brian Wilson, one of today's most important musicians sings his own 'Surf's Up' . . . Poetic, beautiful even in it's obscurity, 'Surf's Up' is one aspect of new things happening in pop music today."

Rock music was the most talked about art form of the day and the Beach Boys were the most talked about group. Brian's energies and ambitions were at their peak and he was channeling them into a project called at first, *Dumb Angel,* and later, *Smile.* He had ideas for new radio programming of a more progressive nature and taped anything and everything — water fountains, forest sounds, animal sounds — all of which found their way into his music. He also surrounded himself with a group of resident L.A. intellectuals, foremost among them being Van Dyke Parks, a former child prodigy and staff producer for Warner Bros. Records. Parks was one of the few people Brian considered an

equal and he became Brian's lyricist. *Surf's Up* was their first collaboration.

In addition to Parks, drugs were a major influence on Brian at this time. (He had been smoking pot and dropping acid since the "Help Me Rhonda" days.) He had also suffered a couple of nervous breakdowns, one of which forced him off the road for good in 1964. He was replaced in the touring group temporarily by Glen Campbell and ultimately by Bruce Johnston. Acid and hash played a major part not so much in shaping the music in *Smile,* as allowing Brian and his collaborators to ignore restraints and adopt a "sky's the limit" attitude toward his project.

Smile now included "Mrs. O'Leary's Cow" (commonly known as "Fire Music"), which through ingenious use of fuzz bass, oscillating violins and cellos, drums and studio technique, Brian created a roaring fire; "Wind Chimes," in which wordless vocals became each note of the chimes and repeated themselves in a haphazard manner which made them sound as though the wind was scattering their voices; "Heroes and Villains" which was twelve minutes long and much more complicated than the version that was later released and "Vege-Tables" extolling the virtues of leafy food (with Paul McCartney sitting in on the session). All of these fragments, and many more, were interchangable. Sometimes "Bicycle Rider" was part of "Heroes," sometimes it was part of "Barnyard Suite." There was also the "Elements Suite," with sections for earth, wind, air and fire — each evocation of its namesake. Though the music is hard to describe, last year I obtained a tape of what was recorded for *Smile,* and the closest comparison I can draw is that it's like side two of *Abbey Road* — only much more adventurous and inventive, a truly ineffable experience. And Brian was thrilled. He felt more alive than at any time in his life. Then it all came down. . . right on top of him.

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Mike Love with Annette Funicello, 1964.

Bad Vibrations

First, the rest of the Beach Boys came home from the road and saw all of these new people surrounding Brian whose chief function seemed to be to take drugs with and encourage their leader. Then there was the music. It was different than anything they had ever heard, and some of them didn't like it. Mike and Bruce have since said they didn't mind the music but didn't like Park's oftentimes obtuse lyrics. Bruce told me in an interview that he once asked Van Dyke what his lyrics meant and he responded, "I don't know." The record company, not knowing what to make of the album, wanted them to return to their surf days. Murry hated it and even though he was not actively involved in the group anymore (fired as their manager in '64, he went out and put together the Sun Rays, who wore striped shirts and white pants and had two hits before fading into obscurity), he still gave Brian grief over his friends, his drug usage and especially his music.

After Brian finished the fire music segment there was a rash of blazes in L.A., one right across the street from the studio he was in, completely freaking him out. He was convinced that he had somehow caused them. Then Brian, who had always had a keen sense of competitive rivalry with Phil Spector, went to see a movie that Spector had helped produce called, *Seconds.* He arrived a little late so that the first words he heard from the screen when he walked in were, "Hello Mr. Wilson, we've been expecting you." Brian turned and walked out. The final blow came when, at Capitol's insistence, Brian put a shortened version of "Heroes and Villians" out as a single. The group hired a fleet of limousines and took a dub of the song down to the No. 1 Boss Rocker in L.A., KHJ. They went in to the jock on duty

and Brian said, "Hi, I'm Brian Wilson and we'd like to give KHJ an exclusive on the new Beach Boys single." The jock looked up and said, "Hey I'm sorry man, can't play anything that's not on the playlist." Brian was crushed. Someone called the Program Director who called the jock and told him to "put it on, you idiot," but too late. The damage was done.

So after all the resistance, weirdness and delays, almost a year had passed since "Good Vibrations." And when *Sgt. Pepper's* came out and was proclaimed the album of the century, Brian just said "fuck it." What was ultimately issued as the next Beach Boys album was a watered-down version of *Smile* called *Smiley Smile*. It consisted of simpler, redone versions of some of the *Smile* material and was interesting in it's own right, but when compared to what it could have been was, as Carl said, "a bunt instead of a grand slam." One critic called it "do-it-yourself, acid casualty doo-wop." And with such an uncommercial LP coming after their most successful single — almost a year later — it made their career take an 180 degree turn.

America, Manson, Europe

The summer of love was upon the country and psychedelia was in full flower. Hendrix, Cream, the Who and the San Francisco sound were all the rage and suddenly the Beach Boys were unfashionably passe. Brian was on the board of directors for the Monterey Pop Festival and the group was slated to play, but eventually pulled out for fear of being booed. It wasn't hip to like the Beach Boys in 1967: from the No. 1 group in the world to rock 'n' roll pariah in just one year.

The albums the band put out in those years were just as strange as the next group's, but were buried beneath the adventurous din of the new heroes' Marshall amplifiers. The Beach Boys created a softer music because of the nature of their personalities. But by now there was something else new about the LPs. They were "Produced by the Beach Boys." Brian, except for assorted cuts on varying albums, had for all intents and purposes dropped out. He was still in the band but rarely present on records.

But that was not their only problem. The newly founded rock press laughed at them, Carl was indicted for draft evasion (he was a C.O. and won his case years later on appeal) and Dennis had fallen in with Charles Manson. Manson wrote a song called "Cease to Exist" which came out on the group's *20/20* LP, with altered lyrics, as "Never Learn Not to Love." Dennis kicked Manson out of his house only a few months before Manson sent the "family" to kill Dennis' friend Terry Melcher, whose house Sharon Tate and the others occupied.

The group got involved with the Marharishi Yogi after Mike returned from his Indian retreat, where he studied with the Beatles at the Marharishi's feet. The band undertook a tour of the U.S. — with the Marharishi — which bombed. Things were grim indeed. But Europe stayed with the band, so they went to the Continent and made a living playing to appreciative audiences overseas. Although they had two hits during this period — "Do it Again" and "Darlin' " (which utilized tracks Brian had cut for a group called Redwood, which later became Three Dog Night) America didn't want to know about the Beach Boys.

"Those guys are really good."

In 1970 there was an incredible turnaround. The band played the Big Sur Folk festival, and after weathering the snide remarks that greeted their appearance, went on to steal the show. They left Capitol for Warner Bros. and released their finest album in years, *Sunflower*. It didn't sell well, but the critical raves were unanimous. Then, under new management, they began to appear at functions that really mattered. They played the May Day Peace Rally in Washington D.C.; a defense fund concert for the Berrigan Brothers. They jammed with the Grateful Dead and the night the Fillmore East closed, Bill Graham introduced them saying, "There are few groups that have had more influence on what is going on today than this one. I really don't know of any." Bob Dylan — backstage that night — commented, "Those guys are really good."

There were two network TV specials — *Good Vibrations in Central Park* and *Good Vibrations in London*, where Elton John and Keith Moon played with them. The concerts during this period were the best they were to do for a long time. Taking the stage with backing musicians, they would open with "Good Vibrations," then proceed to play nothing recorded before *Pet Sounds*, while saving the surf and car songs for encores. People danced in the aisles at Carnegie Hall and the reviews were ecstatic.

In 1971 they released *Surf's Up*, the title track being a hybrid of the original *Smile* track and a newly recorded version. It garnered critical kudos and sold big. In 1972 Bruce Johnstone was kicked out and replaced by two members of a group Carl had produced called Flame: Blondie Chaplin (guitar) and Ricky Fataar (who took over the drums after Dennis severely injured one of his hands). Bringing these two South African blacks into all that is American and white was conceived by some as a calculated move for hip acceptance, though they played and sang well, their material never really *fit* the band.

The first LP they appeared on, *Carl and the Passions — So Tough* was a bomb because of weak material, no Brian and because Warner Bros. released it in a double sleeve with a reissue of Pet Sounds, making it seem even worse by comparison. In '73 *Holland* came out (successfully). The initial LP was rejected by Warner Bros. as too weak and the record company asked Van Dyke Parks to get Brian to contribute a single. Obligingly he went over to Brian's house, made him sit down at the piano and "write me a hit." Brian said he would only if Parks would convince him that he wasn't insane.

He did and Brian came up with "Sail On Sailor." The album was one of *Rolling Stone's* "Albums of the Year" and the magazine also named them "Band of the Year." The group was selling records again and had regained respectability — but what of Brian?

Brian's Back?

Since the *Smile* debacle and his abdication of leadership, Brian had seen his father die; spent six months in bed; purchased, ran and then sold a health food store; produced his wife's group, Spring; gotten onstage with Larry Coryell and sung "Be Bop A Lula" in the middle of one of Coryell's instrumentals and was often seen cruising around LA unshaven and unkempt in the back of a Rolls Royce. He was deeper into drugs and incredibly obese. In many ways the years 1972-75 were the worst of his life. He had ceased being a Beach Boy for the past seven or eight years, except for an odd track here and there. And those that appeared on records such as, "Til I Die" (*Surf'sUp*) or the fairy tale on *Holland*, gave a glimpse into his troubled existence.

Then a different problem arose: more success.

In the summer of 1974 Capitol issued a two record set of oldies called *Endless Summer*. It went No. 1 on the charts, selling to an entirely younger audience. Now, when they worked on new material, they knew they would be competing with themselves, and, as occurred with *Carl and the Passions/Pet Sounds*,

The Boys today: (bottom, l-r) Dennis Wilson, Mike Love and Carl Wilson; (top, l-r) Al Jardine, Brian Wilson and Bruce Johnston.

knew they would lose. At concert appearances the cries for "Help Me Rhonda" started drowning out those for "Surf's Up," so that at Mike's insistence more oldies were put into the live show.

In '75 they did a stadium tour with Chicago and blew America's then-biggest group off the stage every night. They were more popular than ever, but for songs recorded ten years earlier. It posed a huge problem: they couldn't compete with their own songs, and with Brian still in self-imposed exile there was no LP of new music. Ricky and Blondie left at this point, seeing no future for themselves in the band. What to do? Get Brian back and active. Thus started the "Brian's Back" hype, culminating in the 1976 album, *15 Big Ones*.

The ads were in every paper; there were major stories in *Newsweek, T.V. Guide, Time, Rolling Stone,* and *People;* there was a TV special to tie in with the Bi-centennial celebration and all over the country it was proclaimed, "Brian's Back." The world was primed and everything would go their way if they could deliver a record worthy of the hype.

They didn't. Even though the single, "Rock and Roll Music" went Top-10 and the album went gold, it was due mainly to the publicity. The original idea was to go in and cut a bunch of oldies to get Brian acclimated to the studio again and then record an album of all new material for album release. These they did, but halfway through recording the new stuff Brian walked, saying, "Well, I've recorded enough . . . the album's finished."

But there had been trouble from the start. It had been nearly a decade since Brian had participated in the studio. In the meantime, each member of the group had written and produced individual tracks on the recent LPs, and now here was Brian taking complete control again. Dennis, who had once said, "Brian *is* the Beach Boys. We're just his messengers," had grown tremendously in Brian's absence and now was quoted in *Newsweek* as saying, "It was a great mistake to put Brian in full control . . . little did he know that while he was gone people grew up . . . Why should I relinquish my rights as an artist? The whole process was a little bruising." The "whole process" turned out to be a record of half oldies, half new material; half good and half bad. The only encouraging factor was that the production on some of the cuts indicated Brian still had it. The question was, did *it* still have Brian?

The reality of *15 Big Ones* was that Brian was *forced* into doing the record. His long-suffering wife, Marilyn, had finally hired a psychiatrist for her husband. Doing the album was considered therapeutic. Maybe it was, but how therapeutic was sending Brian on *Saturday Night Live* alone, with little more than a remnant of his once beautiful voice, while his shrink stood off camera with cue cards that had instructions like "Smile," "Nod," "Bow," et cetera?

Brian croaked his way through two songs and looked like a caged, frightened animal. Then he was forced to go on tour with the group, the first time since 1964. He sat motionless, staring blankly into space, sometimes not even playing. His feeble attempts at singing were embarrassing. Yet the crowds poured out their love for him in a strange display of affection and curiosity. It was like seeing Howard Hughes, only Hughes may have been in better shape. The talk show circuit followed and each show was worse than the one before. The exception was his last TV appearance — as a presenter on *The Rock Music Awards* show. He was nominated for Rock Hall of Fame that year along with Elvis, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Dylan and the Beatles, and when he came out with Dennis to present an award, he received a long and emotional standing ovation. He was down to 215 pounds, looked great and was coherent. Perhaps the previous public humiliation was worth it — but for anyone who witnessed the Brian Wilson sideshow, it was a painful experience.

Brian Loves You was the best thing he/they had done in years. The songs were childlike in their innocence, yet didn't sound forced, giving a fascinating look into the mind of a troubled genius at that particular time of his life.

Deja Vu

The next album was to be called *Brian Loves You* but was changed to *The Beach Boys Love You* to make it look like more of a group effort, even though it really wasn't. Brian cut most of the tracks by himself while the rest of the group was back on the road. When the guys came home he would add their voices or instruments where they were needed. In a way it was the best thing he/they had done in years. The songs were childlike in their innocence, yet didn't sound forced, and gave a fascinating look into the mind of a troubled genius at that particular time of his life.

Critics were elated. Lester Bangs summed the record up best when he wrote, "*The Beach Boys Love You* pulls off a feat that has eluded Pete Townshend and Mick Jagger — it's almost more juvenile than their original stuff, it's not self-conscious and it sounds right up-to-date. It's that joyous, roller rink in the sky sound that always made them the *real* American music . . . , and as far as I'm concerned it's their best album yet." The stage was set for a commercial and critical success, but right before its release, it was leaked to the press that the band was leaving Warner Bros. for CBS Records, so you can imagine how much promotion the album received . . . exactly one ad in the trades and that was it.

Errata

Since 1978 their output had been erratic. *The M.I.U. Album* was Mike and Al's version of the Beach Boys, since the Wilsons were hardly on it. The only interesting cut was "She's Got Rhythm," but only because Brian sang it in falsetto — something he hadn't done for years. *L.A. (Light Album),* their next release, had the classic "Good Timin'," but little else. 1980's "Keepin' the Summer Alive" had some great music on it. The title tune, a spritely "School Days," "Oh Darlin' " and especially "Goin' On" — on a level with the best they'd ever done. But the LPs did not sell.

On the road they were still doing sellout business, but internally the group was in upheaval. Even with Brian and Bruce back in the group there was no real leadership. The band went through managers (and still does) like George Steinbrenner, so they tried to govern themselves. Usually it was Mike and Al versus Carl and Dennis, with Brian, who had fired his psychiatrist and was fat and out of it again, in the ozone.

In 1978 Mike gained control of the group and the shows went to almost all

pre-*Pet Sounds* oldies. He fired some of the group's backup musicians, and once, during a heated argument, threatened to can Carl and replaced Dennis with (brace yourself) Buddy Miles!?

Things calmed down a little, but in 1981 Carl left the touring group, saying he wouldn't come back unless the band rehearsed before a tour, quit playing Vegas and Vegas type resorts and put some different songs in their sets. Until 1981 became as important to them as 1961 he wouldn't return. He then went out to promote his solo album.

Mike got Brian out of mothballs, hired an Englishman (Adrian Baker) who specialized in Beach Boys "sound-alike" records and hit the road. The shows were terrible. I saw them at Six Flags that summer and was embarrassed. There were numerous false starts and sloppy endings. Brian started to sing too or three song, but each time couldn't finish them and someone else had to take over. The nadir was on the nationally televised concert in July from Long Beach. It was bad enough to be horrible in front of 10,000 people at an amusement park, but this was in front of the *whole country*.

Since then there have been changes for the better. Carl rejoined the group in 1982 after his album went lead (following Dennis, Mike and Bruce's failures). New songs were put into the sets, some of the old backup musicians were brought back, including Billy Hinsche (of Dino, Desi and . . .) and the shows have been remarkable. They've started doing many favorites not heard live in years: songs like "Dance Dance Dance," "All Summer Long," "Disney Girls," "You're So Good to Me," "I Can Hear Music," "The Warmth of the Sun," "Lookin' at Tomorrow" and "Long Promised Road." Their harmonies are as great as ever, because, as Bruce has said to me, "except for Brian, none of the guys' voices have changed." They can and do still sing their songs in the same key. And unlike some of the shows of two or three years ago, there seems to be a lot more camaraderie between the guys onstage. From the opening "California Girls" to the closing "Fun Fun Fun," the shows are one highlight after another and leave you feeling great for days afterwards.

Now and the Future

The touring band is back in shape, but what of Brian and the group's future recording plans? Bruce recently said that Brian is back with the same psychiatrist as before and that he has dropped 60 pounds and looks great. Now they just have to see if he's interested in recording with the group. Bruce is willing to wait for him, but if CBS pressures them, they will look outside the group for the first time for a producer, and perhaps material. Among the names mentioned in this regard have been Barry Gibb, Lindsey Buckingham, Val Garay and Culture Club's producer, Steve Levine, who is also a Beach Boys freak. Any one of them would be an interesting choice and the results would be eagerly awaited.

Brian has created something very rare: a body of work that is relevant and popular today as it was when it was written. It is a continuum.

One hopes Brian will regain his muse. There are those who say that Brian is all right, he just doesn't want to be a Beach Boy and hasn't for 15 years, but family pressure forces him to be there. Since 90 per cent of the band's music is his, he has, in effect, supported his brothers, friend and cousin, and their families as well — an awesome responsibility.

Plus, the business side of the industry has always brought him down. He's an intensely private, shy and troubled man. Maybe the drugs did take their toll, but the only thing that's never hurt him has been the music, and when the family and business pressures overcome the songs, he retreats. He would seem to need freedom from those restraints. Maybe, as Bruce said a few years ago, "Someone should give Brian a grant or something. Don't worry about lyrics, just write music. He could write an incredible symphony."

Daryl Dragon, the classically trained Captain of Captain and Tennille says, "I majored in music in college and I have yet to take a course that had what Brian has in his head. There aren't any courses. It's like he makes the laws. I believe the things he does will be analyzed in 50 years and they will fit into the music history of the day. He's going to make music history someday; they're going to name something after him. I think he's much more inventive than the Beatles were. They never really got to me like Brian did." And as producer Terry Melcher said, "He knows more about music than anyone who's on the present scene. He knows a lot more. He left the music, yes, but he left *it*, it didn't leave him."

Conclusion

Maybe he'll come back and maybe he won't. But if it's a choice between his music and his sanity, I hope he chooses to get well — if he never writes another note, he has left the world a great legacy. There is too much emphasis in this country on what you've done *lately*. You're only as good as your last record, book or movie. It's not healthy. In Europe artists are appreciated for their *oeuvre*, and in that way a career is kept in perspective.

That's the way it should be, because Brian has created something very rare: a body of work that is relevant and popular today as it was when it was written. It is a continuum. Listen to some doo-wop, merseybeat, or psychedelic songs, and, entertaining as they may be, most sound hopelessly dated. Music *should* reflect the times, but one has to make sure he doesn't make a career out of it. Singing about Sandinistas is all well and good and necessary, but in 6 months to a year, who cares? Yesterday's papers. Bob Dylan's "George Jackson" is a great protest song, but one that has to be explained now to people unfamiliar with the subject — unlike "Blowin' in the Wind," which is an eloquent statement, regardless of when it's first heard.

The Beach Boys' music sounds as fresh and vital as it did 20 years ago, resulting in an astounding fact: the group's core audience, 13-24 years old, is *the same* as it was when *they first burst upon the scene*. As much as the world and our culture has changed — from mop tops to safety pins, from the New Frontier to the New Recession — their appeal has remained the same. Where does it say music has to be *timely* to *matter*? The hardest things to capture are universal feelings and Brian Wilson has done this. For me, if it comes to a choice between timely and timeless . . ., SURF'S UP!